

Associated Press

A bill that would allow for construction of a four-lane bridge over the St. Croix River south of Stillwater gets its first congressional hearing Wednesday.

The \$700 million bridge connecting Minnesota and Wisconsin to replace the aging Stillwater lift bridge has long been a source of conflict because of environmental concerns. The National Park Service is attempting to block construction of the bridge, saying it would conflict with the U.S. Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

A bill co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota and Congressman Ron Kind of Wisconsin would clear the way for the new bridge. Stillwater Mayor Ken Harycki tells the St. Paul Pioneer Press that the new bridge is the single most important issue facing the St. Croix River Valley. Harycki is traveling to Washington, D.C. Tuesday in advance of the House subcommittee hearing.